

Healthful Whole Grains!



Are Whole Grains Important for Good Health?

Yes! Whole grains provide the nutrients children and adults need to stay healthy. Whole grains are low in fat and have no cholesterol; they are high in fiber, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and many other healthful substances. Whole grains provide healthful energy for a child's daily activities and reduce their risk of developing health problems.

What Exactly Are Whole Grains?

Whole grain foods contain all three parts of the grain: the bran, the endosperm and germ.

- The outer **bran** layer is full of fiber, B vitamins, 50 to 80 percent of the grain's minerals, and other health-promoting substances called phytochemicals.
- The large **endosperm** portion is full of complex carbohydrates, protein, and some B vitamins.
- The third part is the **germ**, which is full of B vitamins, Vitamin E, trace minerals, healthful unsaturated fats, phytochemicals and antioxidants.

If **all three parts of the grain** are present in processed foods, they are a **whole** grain. By comparison, **refined** grain foods contain only the endosperm. When the germ and bran portions are removed during milling, the nutrient content is reduced by *25 to 90 percent*.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that **at least half of the grains consumed should be whole grains**. Sound impossible? It's easier than you may think. You have many delicious options for adding a whole grain food to each meal without spending a lot of time or money; the most inexpensive whole grains generally are large containers of store-brand oatmeal, breakfast cereals, crackers, brown rice and breads.

Common Types of Whole Grains

- Brown rice (regular or quick)
- Wild rice
- Oatmeal, whole or rolled oats (regular, quick, instant)
- Hulled barley
- Whole wheat
- Whole wheat flour

Less Common Types of Whole Grains

- Amaranth
- Buckwheat or kasha
- Cracked wheat, also called bulgur
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Whole grain corn or cornmeal (yellow and white)
- Whole rye

Through the variety of foods provided in your school meal program, you are an important role model for students in introducing new and healthy foods. Start gradually by introducing whole grains in baking, and then add whole grains to side dishes and entrees. Don't be afraid to try new whole grains. Practice being a savvy whole grain shopper. Students, staff and your own family will benefit from eating whole grains.

Easy Ways to Add Whole Grains

- **Breakfast:** choose a quick and easy ready-to-eat or ready-to-cook whole grain cereal for breakfast like Shredded Wheat, Total®, Raisin Bran, or Oatmeal cereal. Offer whole wheat bagels. Bake cinnamon rolls made with whole wheat flour. Try a from-scratch granola recipe made with whole grains.
- **Baking:** try substituting whole grain flour for one-fourth to one-half of the white flour called for in recipes. Use or choose whole grain in muffins or cornbread made with whole grain corn meal. Add oats to cookies or other desserts.
- **Make it even healthier:** provide low-fat whole grain crackers, baked tortilla chips or brown rice cakes as a healthy choice at a la carte lines or student stores.
- **Cooking:** add whole grains to mixed dishes. Try adding some hulled barley, wild or brown rice to your favorite soup, stew or casserole.
- **Shopping:** choose whole grain pasta (macaroni, spaghetti, noodles), tortillas, rolls and pita pockets. More vendors are now offering whole grain products.
- **Side dishes:** try a hot or cold whole grain side dish (such as pilaf or stuffing) using brown or wild rice, kasha, bulgur or hulled barley.



People who want to start eating more whole grain foods are often unsure how to find them. The key is in knowing which words to look for and which ones are not helpful.

Identify Whole Grain Foods When You Are Shopping/Purchasing for Your School

- Check ingredient lists carefully. **Choose products that have a whole grain as the first ingredient on the list.** Look for products that say “100% whole grain” - meaning no refined flour. On the list of ingredients, the first ingredient listed should be the word “whole,” like “whole wheat” or “100% whole wheat.”
- A food’s color is **not** helpful in identifying whether it contains whole grain ingredients. Dark or brown bread may be a whole grain food or it may just have molasses or caramel food coloring added.
- “*Made with whole grains.*” These words alone do **not** guarantee that the product is nutrient-rich or health enhancing. Some of these cereals are still nearly half sugar - their number one ingredient.

Phrases That Do Not Mean Whole Grain

- “**100% wheat**” This phrase means that the only grain contained in the product is wheat. This may be all refined wheat flour, and no whole wheat flour.
- “**Multigrain**” A word that means the product contains more than one kind of grain; however, the food may **not** contain **whole** grains.
- “**Stone ground**” This term refers to grain that is coarsely ground and may contain the germ, but not the bran. Often, refined flour is the first ingredient, not whole grain flour. Check the ingredient list.
- “**Pumpernickel**” is coarse, dark bread made with rye and wheat flours. In the U.S., it usually does **not** contain mostly whole grain flours.